The Influence of Aeschylus and Euripides on the Structure and Content of Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon and Erechtheus

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SWINBURNE'S DEBT CONCEDED. Swinburne's debt to Greek literature is conceded by all who are competent to express an opinion on the subject. Skeptics may settle the question by a casual reading of such works as Phaedra, Itylus, Anactoria, Hymn to Proserpine, Sapphics, At Eleusis, Hymn to Man, Genesis, Teiresias, The last Oracle, To Victor Hugo, Two Leaders, The Armada, Neap-tide, Thalassius, On the Cliffs, Song for the Centenary of Walter Savage Landor, Athens, Herse, Nine Years Old, Aperotos Eros, and Nympholept. The evidence will be convincing. But in addition to these we have Atalanta in Calydon and Erechtheus, both in their technique Greek plays of a high order. Of Erechtheus Edmond Gosse says: "It is the most Greek of all the compositions of Swinburne, because it follows, with the greatest success, closely and yet vividly, the exact classical models. It is not merely Greek, but it is passionately Athenian, and Athens is considered, not as a theme of antiquarian curiosity, but as the living symbol of the virtue of citizenship." Woodberry says of Swinburne: "He moved toward a reproduction of both the Greek and the English antique. Atalanta in Calydon was his first experiment in this way, but Erechtheus, his second Greek play, was more perfect in the success that it aimed at." Swinburne's method of using Aeschylus and Euripides to facilitate the attainment of this end, it is the object of the following pages to make clear.

SCHOLARSHIP. Both friends and critics attest Swinburne's scholarship,—a scholarship that not only comprehended the literature of his own and foreign languages, but extended even to a facility in the use of them as media of literary expression. "No English poet has ever had so wide and familiar acquaintance with the poetry of foreign climes. He began with a felicitous command of the classical and romance languages. He took the Taylorian prize, in his college days, for French and Italian, and won other similar distinction in the ancient tongues. He has written, as a poet, in Greek, Latin, and French with literary mastery." (Woodberry.) Edmund Gosse voices the same opinion, as does Swinburne's lifelong friend Redesdale. Ruskin says, "He knows Greek,

Latin, French as well as he knows English—can write splendid verses with equal ease in any of the four languages—knows nearly all the best literature of the four languages as well as I know—well—better than I know anything."

ASSIMILATION OF GREEK AUTHORS. At Eton Swinburne was devoted to that charming anthology, the old Eton Poetae Graeci, to which he owed his earliest introduction to Theocritus and Alcaeus, and on which was founded his life-long passion for Sappho. (Gosse.) The same writer tells us that Swinburne was so devoted to Aeschylus that he carried in his mind practically the whole of the Oresteia, and asserts that there are those still living who bear witness to his ability to quote Aeschylus as long as any auditor had the patience to listen to him. "He delighted in repeating other poetry, and was particularly ready to spout the dramas of Aeschylus, when he would gradually become intoxicated by the sonority of the Greek, and would dance about the room in the choral passages, making a very surprising noise."

ASSIMILATION OF GREEK. The Greek elegiacs prefixed to Atalanta in Calydon reveal the extent of Swinburne's early assimilation of the diction and phraseology of that language, while his more intensely Greek Erechtheus shows how this process went on through the years that followed the composition of his first Greek tragedy. Of the significance of this gift Swinburne himself seems well aware, for he says: "The faculty of assimilation is most important and is to be distinguished from imitation. It is one of the surest and strongest signs of strong and original genius."

PREFERENCES. With Swinburne's love of Greek went a strongly marked preference for certain Greek authors and a dislike of others that was equally intense. To him Aeschylus was the "godlike father of tragic poetry," while Euripides was "the clumsiest of botchers that ever floundered through his work as dramatist." But in spite of his distaste, he felt the spell of the botcher, from whom he borrowed, on occasion, as freely as he borrowed from the godlike father of tragic song.

CHARACTERISTICS In fact a marked characteristic of Swinburne's tragic style is the introduction of Aeschylean ideas treated in the Euripidean manner,—the presentation of a character cast in the Aeschylean mould, but endowed with Euripidean psychology.

SWINBURNE'S DEBT TO AESCHYLUS

Swinburne's passion for Aeschylus, unlike Dionysus' *pothos Euripidou*, underwent neither change nor moderation. Throughout his long career he regarded the Greek tragedian as a god who towered above other gods; and it was from his temple that he got the inspiration that bore up his own song in its most sublime flights. In both prose and verse he sings his praise whenever occasion arises to speak of what is most precious and potent in the hearts of men. To quote him while commending another is high praise. Speaking of Victor Hugo, he says: "his hand has never been firmer, his note more clear than now:

ἔτι γὰρ θεόθεν καταπνείει
πειθὼ μολπᾶν
ἁλκᾷ ξύμφυτος αἰών.

A character of Hugo's he pictures as "One of those Aeschylean women, a monstrous goddess, whose tone of voice 'gave a sort of Promethean grandeur to her furious and amorous words,' who had in her the tragic and titanic passion of the women of the Eleusinian feasts 'seeking the Satyrs under the stars.'" And again "It is Aeschylus . . . who fills the bitter air of the Scythian ravine with music of wings and words more sweet than sleep to the weary, with notes of heavenly pity and love unsubduable by fear; who shows us with one touch of terrible tenderness the maiden agony of Iphigenia, smiting with the piteous dart of her eye each one of the ministers of sacrifice, in dumb show as of a picture striving to speak to them; who throws upon the most fearful scene in all tragedy a flash of pathos unspeakable, when Clytemnestra bares before the sword of her son the breast that suckled him as he slept." He never wearies of "the music that Aeschylus set to verse, the music that made mad, the upper notes of the psalm strong and shrill as a sea-wind, the 'bull-voiced' bellowing undersong of those dread choristers from somewhere out of sight, the tempest of tambourines giving back thunder to the thunder, the fury of divine lust that thickened with human blood the hill-streams of Cithaeron." With what delight does he call attention to his translation from the Agamemnon.

Ah, ah the doom (thou knowest whence rang that wail)
Of the shrill nightingale!
(From whose wild lips thou knowest that wail was thrown)

For round about her have the great gods cast
A wing-borne body and clothed her close and fast
With a sweet life that hath no part in moan.
But me, for me (how hadst thou heart to hear)
Remains a sundering with the two-edged spear.

Referring to Aeschylus' metaphor of a lion's whelp, he sings:

The best men's tongue that ever glory knew
Called that a drop of dew
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb
Came forth, a blameless bloom.
We have no word, as had those men most high,
To call a baby by. (Herse)

In Comparisons he uses the figure again.

Child, when they say that others
Have been or are like you,
Babes fit to be your brothers,
Sweet human drops of dew,
Bright fruit of mortal mothers,
What should one say or do?

MANNER OF IMITATION, SUB-TITLE OR MOTTO. Swinburne sometimes states his theme in the form of a line of Aeschylus quoted under the title of a poem. As a sub-title of the Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic we read

αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ'εὖ νικάτω.

REFRAIN. This line is also used as a refrain in A Year's Burden:

Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Under The Litany of Nations occur two lines from The Supplices, which he translates at the close:

μᾶ γᾶ μᾶ γᾶ βοᾷ
φοβερὸν ἀπότρεπε

He uses as a motto for Two Leaders Eumenides 1034–5 which he translates as a close for the last stanza.

Go honored hence, go home,
Night's childless children; here your hour is done;
Pass with the stars and leave us with the sun.

Aeschylus enjoys the company of Pindar on the title page of Erechtheus, and also supplies the theme of An Autumn Vision:

ζεφύρου γίγάντος αὔρᾳ.

TITLE. Occasionally we find an Aeschylean phrase used as the real title of a poem, as Aperotos Eros (Choe. 600).

STYLE

PILED-UP ADJECTIVES. Swinburne often imitates Aeschylus' piled-up adjective effects. These effects exhibit various degrees of complication.

> The caught-up choked dry laughters—
> And her mouth's sad red heavy rose all through—
> By the tideless dolorous inland sea—
> White-eyed and poison-finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curled—
>
> A star upon your birthday burned,
> Whose fierce serene
> Red pulseless planet never yearned
> In heaven, Faustine.
>
> Villon our sad bad glad mad brother's name—
> Bird of the bitter bright gray golden morn—
> The adorable sweet living marvelous strange light that lightens us—
> The sea-forsaken forlorn deep wrinkled salt slanting stretches of sand—

With the last compare Aeschylus, Supp. 798 ff.

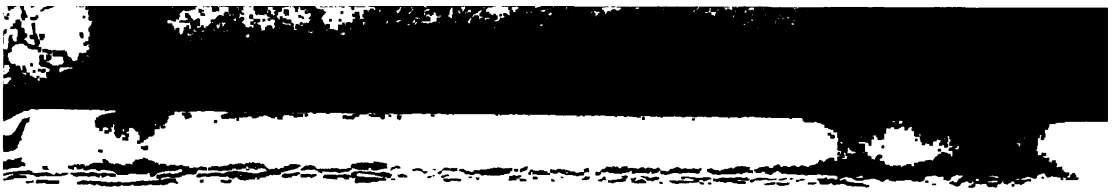
> Would that I had a seat in the air on high where the vapory clouds turn into snow; or that there were some smooth inaccessible summit-hid solitary hanging vulture-haunted rock to be witness of my plunge into the depths below.

This usage is common in Aeschylus. See Persae 316, 940, 855, and two very fine examples, Agamemnon, 154–5; 192–7. Swinburne may have had the last passage in mind when he wrote:

> but we for all our good things, we
> Have at their hands which fill all these folk full,
> Death, barrenness, child-slaughter, curses, cares,
> Sea-leaguer and land-shipwreck;

and

> This fair live youth I give you to be slain,
> Spent, shed, poured out, and perish;



Swinburne sometimes abuses the device, as:

> what hath he,
> The man that hath no country? Gods nor man
> Have such to friend, yoked beast-like to base life,
> Vile, fruitless, grovelling at the foot of death,
> Landless and kinless thralls of no man's blood,
> Unchilded and unmothered, abject limbs
> That breed things abject; but who loves on earth
> Not friend, wife, husband, father, mother, child,
> Nor loves his own life for his own land's sake,
> But only this thing more, more this than all,
> He loves all well, and well of all is loved,
> And this love lives forever.

DRAMATIC IRONY. Swinburne is quite Aeschylean in his employment of dramatic irony. At the close of the prologue of the Atalanta the speaker prays to Artemis:

"Help, and give honor, and to mine hounds *good speed.*" This "good speed" is echoed with grim irony by Meleager at the close of his first speech where he prays:

> That this great hunt with heroes for the hounds
> May leave thee memorable and us *well sped.*

A fine example is Althaea's fond hope for little Helen and Clytemnestra, when Meleager pictures to her their sweet childishness:

> Sweet days befall them and good loves and lords
> And tender and temperate honors of the hearth,
> Peace, and a perfect life and blameless bed.

There is an Aeschylean double meaning in Althaea's cry when she learns that the boar is dead:

> Wherefore be glad and all ye give much thanks,
> For *fallen is all the trouble* of Calydon.

And later,

> Some bring flowers and crown
> These gods and all the lintel, and shed wine,
> Fetch sacrifice and slay; *for heaven is good.*

LITOTES. Litotes occurs with Aeschylean frequency. The following are characteristic examples:

> Where the old winds cease not blowing, and all the night
> Thunders, and day is no delight to men.

and

> And in their moist and multitudinous flower
> Slept no soft sleep, with violent visions fed,
> The blind bulk of the immeasurable beast.

The following is an example of irony and litotes combined. Althaea addresses her dead brothers, just slain by Meleager.

> O brethren, O my father's sons, of me
> Well-loved and well-reputed, I should weep
> Tears dearer than the dear blood drawn from you
> But that *I know you not uncomforted,*
> *Sleeping no shameful sleep however slain,*
> *For my son surely hath avenged you dead.*

PUNS. The Greek fondness for punning on proper names appears also in Swinburne. A few examples will make this clear. Althaea and the chorus pun on the name Meleager.

> Althaea: Wert thou not called Meleager from this womb?
> Chorus: A grievous huntsman hath it bred to thee.

Speaking of herself, Althaea says:

> My name, that was a healing, it is changed,
> My name is a consuming.

So Erechtheus speaks of his antagonist.

> Son of the sea's lord and our first-born foe,
> Eumolpus; nothing sweet in ears of thine
> The music of his making;

WORD ORDER. Swinburne often betrays his Greek cast of mind by his word order. This is particularly noticeable in the position of proper nouns, which often close a phrase at the beginning of a line. In the prologue of Erechtheus we find:

> A strange growth grafted on our natural soil,
> A root of Thrace in Eleusinian earth,
> Set for no comfort to the kindly land,
> Son of the sea's lord and our first-born foe,
> *Eumolpus;*

and

> Then one shot happier, the Cadmean seer,
> *Amphiaraus;*

This position of the participle is also note worthy. See Atalanta 1363,

> **And all they praised the gods with mightier heart,**
> **Zeus, and all gods, but chiefest Artemis,**
> ***Seeing;***

And Erechtheus, 267

> **I have not heart to honor, or dare hold**
> **More than I hold thee of the gods in hate,**
> ***Hearing;***

For a similar Aeschylean usage see Sept. 412:

> σπαρτῶν δ'ἀπ' ἀνδρῶν, ὧν Ἄρης ἐφεισατο,
> ῥίζωμ' ἀνεῖται, κάρτα δ'ἔστ' ἐγχώριος,
> Μελάνιππος.

and Sept. 532, 545; Persae, 206, 255; Prom. 369; Agam. 513, 813, 1436; Eum. 7, 8.

EPIC TOUCH. Swinburne resembles Aeschylus in the employment of epic reminiscences and the atmosphere of the epic. The Iliad stands open in the second episode of Atalanta, where Althaea and Meleager review the gathering of the huntsmen; the clang of arms resounds in the battle with the boar. In this episode we get also a complete catalogue of heroes engaged in the hunt. The thunder of battle in Erechtheus fairly outroars that of the Septem.

FORCE. In addition to these Aeschylean qualities we find another, force;—force in diction, metaphor, versification, characterization, and action, that is distinctly Aeschylean. This is apparent in Atalanta in Calydon, and also in Erechtheus. Although the former transgresses by its length the proper measure of a Greek play, it moves rapidly and unerringly; it is full of the atmosphere of the heroic, and of the potency of divinity. It presents the inevitable laws of destiny, even working them out before our eyes. In Erechtheus we are made aware of strength of character great enough to impel every member of the most noble family of Athens to self-sacrifice for dear 'mother land.'

DRAMATIC STRUCTURE. A careful examination of Atalanta in Calydon and Erechtheus will reveal their Aeschylean model. The prologue, parodos, episodes, and stasima are structurally Aeschylean and are motivated in the true Aeschylean manner and reveal the Aeschylean unity which makes it almost impossible to separate a passage from its context without injuring the whole.

EURIPIDEAN INFLUENCE

Swinburne always affected a hatred of Euripides. Of this Gosse says:

Swinburne's hatred of Euripides was never expressed more violently than when he was writing Erechtheus, perhaps because he was unable to forget that he was using a theme which had already passed through the hands of Euripides. Indeed, he was not merely fully aware of, but grudgingly consented to adopt the argument saved for us by the orator Lycurgus, and the long fragment, a speech of Praxithea, which are enough to give us some inkling of Euripides' treatment. A clumsy reviewer described Swinburne's play as a "translation from Euripides," ignorant of the fact that the supposed original disappeared, save for the bit preserved by Lycurgus, before the christian era. Swinburne was too furious to see how funny this blunder was, but it provoked from him a private protest of great importance. In a letter to a friend (Jan. 2, 1876) he said: "A fourth form boy could see that as far as Erechtheus can be said to be modeled after any body, it is modeled throughout after the earliest style of Aeschylus. I *did* introduce (instead of a hint and a verse or two acknowledged in my notes) a good deal of the 'long and noble fragment' referred to, into Praxithea's first long speech, but the translated verses (I must say it) were so palpably and pitiably inferior both in thought and expression to the rest, that the first persons I read that part of the play to in MS., knowing nothing of Greek, remarked the falling-off at once—the discrepancy and blot on the face of my work—so I excised the sophist, only keeping a hint or two of his best lines. If this sounds 'Outrecuidant' or savouring of 'Surquedry' you may remember that I have always maintained it is far easier to overtop Euripides by the head and shoulder than to come up to the waist of Sophocles or the knee of Aeschylus."

He preserved this prejudice against Euripides from school time to the grave and he always asserted that he was supported in it by the conversation of Jowett. Neither the stoicism nor the scepticism of Euripides was agreeable to Swinburne, and what did not please him excessively he was apt to reject altogether.

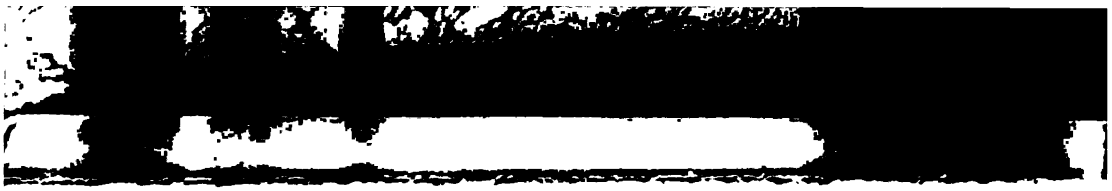
In Swinburne's Studies in Prose and Poetry we find the following:

The critic who once wrote to me and rejoiced my very soul by writing "I have been reading Euripides lately and still retain my old and bad opinion of him—sophist, sentimentalist, sensationalist—no Greek in the better sense of the term."

It was all I could do on another occasion to win from him an admission of the charm and grace and sweetness of the shorter and sweeter lyrics which redeem in some measure the reputation of the dreariest of playwrights,—if that term be not over complimentary for the clumsiest of botchers that ever floundered through his work as dramatist.

"I have been reading Euripides again," he said, "and I think even less of him than I did: he is immoral when he is irreligious, and when he is religious he is more immoral still." Pages of his note-books are filled with depreciative criticisms

Cf. *Life of Benjamin Jowett*, Vol. 2, p. 68.



of the poet. "Monotonous, insipid, feeble, immoral; endless commonplace—sophisticated and affected in expression, as well as in thought—undignified and exaggerated—Homer and other tragedians mixed with puerilities." These are general criticisms, and the same spirit appears in the examination of each play. Thus of the Orestes he observes: "Absolute want of poetical justice in the Orestes; no reason for the treatment of Menelaus and Helen except that they are only sympathizing, and therefore said to be false friends; still less for the treatment of Hermione—gross improbability! Orestes and Electra are said to be carefully watched, and yet they have Helen in their power, and her foreign guards. The condition in which the spectator's mind is left in all, or nearly all Euripides' plays is wholly unsatisfactory."

This probably accounts, in great measure, for Swinburne's opinion of Euripides, and he could not have had him in mind when he spoke of a writer renewing 'for us the ancient life of his models, not by mechanical and servile transcript as of a copying clerk, but by loving and reverent emulation as of an original fellow-craftsman.'

KNOWLEDGE OF EURIPIDES. But whatever his opinion of Euripides, his knowledge of his works was evidently great, and whether he made use of that knowledge in a spirit of reverent emulation, it is impossible to say; at any rate he certainly made free use of it.

PLOTS. Both of his plots are based on Euripidean plays. Ὁ σοφὸς Εὐριπίδης δρᾶμα περὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Μελεάγρου ἐξέθετο, Eur. fr. Meleager, and reference has been made to the fragments of his Erechtheus, preserved by Lycurgus. Of Meleager we have, in the edition that was available for Swinburne, fragments that total sixty complete lines and four half lines. Of these Swinburne used in all twenty-eight lines. For the motto of the play he chose fragment 536,

> Treat well the living; every man, once dead,
> Is dust and shadow; naught to nothing fled.

THE FRAGMENTS OF THE MELEAGER

Swinburne must have had this idea in mind in several passages in the play, particularly in the last speech of Meleager himself. Fragment 519 gave him not one hint but several. 520 served as a beginning of the chorus' description of the king's sacrifice. Swinburne makes use of the pun on the name Meleager, which occurs in fragment 521, and is, according to Plato, bad etymology. Swinburne has done in this instance

what is rather the usual thing for him,—he had made two lines of one. Althaea asks,

> Wast thou not called Meleager from this womb?

to which the chorus replies,

> A grievous huntsman hath it bred for thee.
> Fr. 521 Meleager thou, for grievous is thy hunting.

Althaea, watching the heroes, asks,

> But who shows next an eagle wrought in gold
> That flames and beats broad wings against the sun
> And with void mouth gapes after emptier prey?

Meleager replies,

> Know by that sign the reign of Telamon
> Between the fierce mouths of the encountering brine
> On the straight reefs of twice-washed Salamis.

Althaea

> For like one great of hand he bears himself
> Vine-chapleted, with savours of the sea,
> Glittering as wine and moving as a wave.

> Fr. 534 Telamon, eagle of gold upon his shield,
> A barrier against the beast, with clustering grapes
> His head enwreathed, to honor Salamis,
> His land of goodly vines.

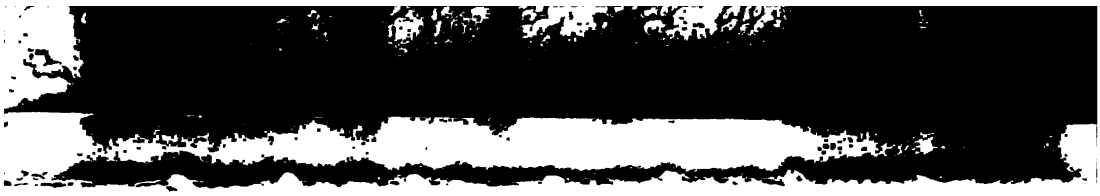
The same fragment characterizes Atalanta, and shows in what repute she stood, and possibly suggested the attitude of Swinburne's Althaea toward her.

> Fr. 530 Arcadian Atalanta Cypris-scorned
> With hounds and hunting gear.

Swinburne calls her Arcadian Atalanta, snowy-souled, and gives a description of her hounds and equipment in the contest with the boar. From the same fragment we get a suggestion for these lines also:

> Ancaeus great of hand, an iron bulk,
> Two-edged for fight as the ax against his arm.

> cf. fr. 534 Ancaeus brandished ax with blade that bit
> Both ways.
> Fr. 531 An iron-weighted club he grasped in hand.



And to make use of the rest of the fragment he writes:

> Next by the left unsandaled foot know thou
> The sail and oar of this Aetolian land,
> Thy brethren, Toxeus, and the violent-souled
> Plexippus, ever swift with hand and tongue.

Euripides says,

> Thestius' sons,
> Their left foot all unshod, but on the right
> The sandal, thus to leave them light of foot,
> A custom held of all Aetolian men.

The nine lines in this fragment seem to form part of a catalogue of the hunt. Swinburne saw fit to incorporate them in his review. Althaea plays a rôle similar to that of Helen on the wall, but, reversing the situation, as is the habit with Swinburne's characters, she questions her son about the men gathering for the hunt. But see Macrobius, Sat. 5, 18, 17 Morem vero Aetolis fuisse uno tantum modo pede calceato in bellum ire ostendit clarissimus scriptor Euripides tragicus, in cuius tragoedia quae Meleager inscribitur nuntius inducitur describens quo quisque habitu fuerit ex ducibus qui ad aprum capiendum convenerant. Not finding enough in this hint to supply his gallery, Swinburne went to Aeschylus and borrowed Tydeus from the Septem to serve Althaea as a comparison for her son.

Fr. 538 "Gods that face the sun"

is similar to

> Those warder gods that face the sun.

Of women Althaea says

> Praise be with men abroad; chaste lives with us,
> Home-keeping days and household reverence.

So

fr. 521 A woman to be good must stay at home,
Once out of doors she is of little worth.

This seems to be the idea in both Swinburne's play and that of Euripides; the following fragment adds weight:

Fr. 522 If labor at the loom should fall to men,
And women bear the brunt of wielding arms,
Then from their skill of hand all fallen away
They would be nothing worth nor more would we.

Plexippus, taunting Meleager, says,

> Why, if she ride among us for a man,
> Sit thou for her and spin; a man grown girl
> Is worth a woman weaponed; sit thou here.

and Atalanta, speaking of herself, says,

> Lest one revile me, a woman, yet no wife,
> That bear a spear for spindle and this bow strung
> For a web woven.

Of death Meleager says to his father:

> Pray thou thy days be long before thy death,
> And full of ease and kingdom, seeing in death
> There is no comfort and none aftergrowth,
> Nor shall one thence look up and see day's dawn
> Nor light upon the land whither I go.

So in fr. 533 we read

> This light is sweet; the darkness under earth
> Gives no delight for man to enter in
> Even in a dream; and I though grown so old
> Abominate it; never wish to die.

Fr. 543 is just one word, "He offered up sacrifice," which finds its echo in "when the king did sacrifice,"

This seems on the whole quite a number of hints for a poet to take from the scanty fragments of one he held in such contempt.

FRAGMENTS OF ERECHTHEUS. Of the fragments of the Erechtheus he made little use, but somewhat more than he claimed in the letter quoted by Gosse. An examination of the fragment referred to (Nauck 362) will show that he made use of more than a hint and one or two of the best lines. Moreover fragment 370 of the Erechtheus seems to find an echo in Atalanta, where Althaea tells her son of the glorious old age that comes to men who have done great deeds and thought high thoughts. This shows that Swinburne learned early the value of material found in the tragic fragments; he certainly made free use of whatever appealed to him in those of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

SENTIMENTALITY AND RHESIS. In Swinburne, Euripidean sentimentality often appears in the form of tender reminiscence. It is seldom indulged in when the person to whom it is directed is present, although that sometimes happens. Althaea makes most

use of it in Atalanta in Calydon and under most diverse conditions. She grows sentimental in the contemplation of her own unhappiness, of the dreams that haunt her, her absent kin, her dead mother Eurythemis, her own solitude when bereft of her brothers. Every note in the gamut of mother love is played upon. The first is struck in the long rhesis of the first episode, and the habit, established early, persists to the end. We learn all the details of Meleager's birth, his beauty, his audacity in trying to take hold of the distaff of the Fates,

> a tenderer thing
> Than any flower of fleshly seed alive.

Then in sudden contrast with this, she pictures him as he appears for the hunt.

> So light a thing was this man grown so great
> Men cast their heads back, seeing against the sun
> Blaze the armed man carved on his shield, and hear
> The laughter of little bells along the brace
> Ring, as birds singing or flutes blown, and watch
> High up the cloven shadow of either plume
> Divide the bright light of the brass and make
> His helmet as a windy and wintering moon
> Seen through blown cloud and plume-like drift, when ships
> Drive, and men strive with all the sea, and oars
> Break, and the beaks dip under, drinking death;
> Yet was he then but a span long, and moaned
> With inarticulate mouth inseparate words,
> And with blind lips and fingers wrung my breast
> Hard, and thrust out with foolish hands and feet.
> Murmuring; (Cf. Aesch. Sept. 380-395.)

This is a very good example of an Aeschylean reminiscence set in the Euripidean manner.

Meleager is the true son of his mother in this respect; he indulges in fond recollections of little Helen and grave Clytemnestra, like pasturing fawns that graze and fear some arrow. The former laughs and lightens with her eyes in the manner of the Aeschylean lion cub raised in the house to be the Atè of the inhabitants. He often grows sentimental in talking with his mother:

> For what thou art I know thee, and this thy breast
> And thy fair eyes I worship and am bound
> Toward thee in spirit and love thee in all my soul.
> For there is nothing terribler to men
> Than the sweet face of mothers and the might.

Sometimes it leads him into a hymeneal figure, as when speaking of his Argonautic expedition he recalls the time when

> The first furrow in virginal green sea
> Followed the plunging plough share of hewn pine,

a figure which he employs again when in the exodos he addresses his mother for the last time:

> Thou too, the bitter mother and mother-plague
> Of this my weary body,—thou too, queen,
> The source and end, the sower and the scythe,
> The rain that ripens and the drought that slays,
> The sand that swallows and the spring that feeds,
> To make me and unmake me,—thou, I say,
> Lucret. 4, 1272 Althaea, since my father's ploughshare, drawn
> Sept. 754 Through fatal seedland of a female field,
> Furrowed thy body, whence a wheaten ear
> Strong from the sun and fragrant from the rains
> I sprang and cleft the closure of thy womb,
> Mother, I dying with unforgetful tongue
> Hail thee as holy and worship thee as just
> Who art unjust and unholy; and with my knees
> Would worship, but thy fire and subtlety,
> Dissundering them, devour me;

The same figure of generation is developed with a rapturous delight in the fourth stasimon of Erechtheus, and also serves to show how Euripidean Swinburne can make an Aeschylean idea appear. (Cf. Aes. fr. Danaed. 44.)

Even Atalanta becomes sentimental in the contemplation of her cold sacred life:

> I shall have no man's love,
> Forever, and no face of children born
> Or feeding lips upon me or fastening eyes
> Forever, nor being dead shall kings my sons
> Mourn me and bury, and tears on daughters' cheeks
> Burn; but a cold and sacred life, but strange,
> But far from dances and the back-blowing torch,
> Far off from flowers or any bed of man
> Shall be my life forever; me the snows
> That face the first o' the morning, and cold hills
> Full of the land-wind and sea-traveling storms
> And many a wandering wing of noisy nights
> That know the thunder and hear the thickening wolves—

> Me the utmost pine and footless frost of woods
> That talk with many winds and gods, the hours
> Rerisen and white divisions of the dawn,
> Springs thousand-tongued with the intermitting reed
> And streams that murmur of the mother snow—
> Me these allure and know me, but no man,
> Knows, and my goddess only.

In the Erechtheus the sentimental touch is used just as freely; Erechtheus is sentimental in his attitude to Athens, to Praxithea, and to the battle; and Praxithea is just as sentimental in her attitude to her 'mother-land,' her husband, and her daughter.

SOPHISTRY. Althaea sounds the sophistic note in her very first speech, where she challenges the attitude of the chorus. During the episode she expounds to them the envy of the gods, the curse of love, and the burden of life. She even cites the source of her wisdom: she had heard

> high sayings of one most wise,
> Eurythemis my mother, who beheld
> With eyes alive and spake with lips of these
> As one on earth disfleshed and disallied
> From breath or blood corruptible; such gifts
> Time gave her, and an equal soul to these
> And equal face to all things; thus she said.

Although the chorus maintains through the first episode its own attitude to the gods, the effect of her speech is seen in the next song, in the very pessimistic attitude taken to man and his creation; and this attitude grows more and more sombre as the play progresses. Indeed the sophistication of the chorus, under Althaea's influence is one of the most interesting phenomena in the play. Toward the close of the play we find them speaking, like nurses trained in a maternity hospital, of gestation, birth, and the nurture of children.

> the son lies close about thine heart,
> Full of thy milk, warm from thy womb, and drains
> Life and the blood of life and all thy fruit,
> Eats thee and drinks thee as who breaks bread and eats,
> Treads wine and drinks, thyself a sect of thee;
> And if he feed not, shall not thy flesh faint?
> Or drink not, are not thy lips dead for thirst?
> This thing moves more than all things, even thy son,

That thou cleave to him; and he shall honor thee,
Thy womb that bare him and the breasts he knew,
Reverencing most for thy sake all his gods.

The king too assumes the air of wisdom although he is not given opportunity to make much use of it. Attracted by the argument of Althaea and her son, he enters with the remark:

Lady, the daughter of Thestius, and thou, son,
Not ignorant of your strife nor light of wit,
Scared with vain dreams and fluttering like spent fire,
I come to judge between you, but a king
Full of past days and wise from years endured.

The sophistry of Praxithea is perhaps as great as that of Althaea, but it lacks the parade, so is not so noticeable.

RHETORIC. Rhetoric of the declamatory Euripidean sort is to be found in all the plays of Swinburne, from the earliest to the latest; it is not peculiar to the Greek plays, although in them it has no small place. We see everywhere the tendency of the author to lose control of the theme and lapse into a hysteria of sentimentality. It is not confined to one character, but is characteristic of all. Althaea is the greatest sinner, not because it is more characteristic of her, but because she has greater opportunity. Meleager, in his last speech, is superlatively rhetorical in the bad sense of the term; Atalanta, in her justification of her presence, is equally so; while Praxithea's first long speech to Chthonia is a fine example of a rhesis that is both sophistic and rhetorical, and steeped in sentimentality.

EROS TYRANNUS. Althaea states her conception of love in the first episode, and throughout the play she develops the theme with many modulations.

but I know
Foolish and wise men must be to the end,
And feed myself with patience; but this most,
This moves me, that for wise men as for fools
Love is one thing, an evil thing, and turns
Choice words and wisdom into fire and air.
And in the end shall no joy come, but grief,
Sharp words and soul's division and fresh tears
Flower wise upon the old root of tears brought forth,
Fruit-wise upon the old flower of tears sprung up,
Pitiful sighs and much regrafted pain.

The second stasimon, that precedes the meeting of Meleager and Atalanta, treats it from every possible phase. For Euripidean reminiscences see Hipp. 527 ff., 764; 13; Troades, 511–70, 799–860, 1060–1120, 1272 ff.; Helen, 1300 ff. Althaea decries love as a personal evil, while the chorus treats it as an evil that brings about the destruction of cities and the overthrow of nations.

THE SUPREME EVIL

WE ARE AGAINST THEE, O GOD MOST HIGH! Atalanta, giving stern warning to those who oppose her participation in the hunt, appeals to the supreme god to judge between them.

> for now,
> If there be any highest in heaven, a god
> Above all thrones and thunders of the gods
> Throned, and the wheels of the world roll under him,
> Judge he between me and all of you and see
> If I transgress at all; but ye, refrain
> Transgressing hands and reinless mouths, and keep
> Silence, lest by much foam of violent words
> And proper poison of your lips ye die.

This motivates not only the chorus that follows but the remainder of the play. The double figure used by Swinburne has two aspects; one, looking to the hunt with its deeds of prowess, and the other, psychological, showing the sinister working of fate within the minds of all who tread the wretched stage, and man's unconsciousness of the power that waits to hurl him to ruin. Taking up the theme of the Infatuate Word, the chorus proceeds to lash itself into a very ecstasy of fury that leads straight to the shambles of Até. Woodberry thinks that 'the thought is arrived at through the spectacle of the suffering of the human race, and applies, as it were, to the Zeus of Prometheus.' But the attitude of Prometheus, the god, to his brother god is mild when compared to that of man to his sardonic creator, whom he pleases to characterize as The Supreme Evil. Prometheus calls nature to witness his woes; man taunts god himself for the ills that fall to mortal lot. Prometheus sees the end of his suffering; and man knows that

> A little fruit a little while is ours,
> And the worm finds it soon,

and then comes death and much forgetfulness of things.

Man takes delight in reviling god for his treatment of the thing "fashioned with loathing and love," a thing that is clothed with derision, whose life is a watch between a sleep and a sleep. In spite of the Aeschylean motivation, that suffering will follow transgressing hands and reinless mouths, the whole outlook of the chorus is Euripidean.

> Thou hast laid
> Upon us with thy left hand life, and said
> Live: and again thou hast said, Yield up thy breath,
> And with thy right hand laid upon us death. (Cf. Eur. Med. 1109)

Helen blames god for her woes (Troad. 1042ff.). Apollo is the destroyer, as his name declares; Fr. 781 O fair shining Helios, how hast thou destroyed him and me also; rightly among mortals art thou called Apollo. Fr. 273, "For all men, and not for us alone, the god at one time or another has ruined life." For various forms of the same idea see Hecuba, 197, 721; Phoen. 1030; Iph. Aul. 411; Upon high and low alike falls their ill-will. Cf. Helen, 1213; Orestes, 954, Iph. Aul. 536. In brief the whole outlook upon life is Euripidean; death is promised us, but not before sorrows and tears and woes and mishaps and old age. We all carry our burdens, beneath which each one is crushed. (Alcestis 893.) See Alcestis 20, Hipp. 981, Ion 381 ff., Troad, 1203.

Swinburne looks forward to death with a sort of eagerness, while Euripides is fond of contemplating the many misfortunes that anticipate it. Cf. fr. 264, 540, 558.

Swinburne's burden of age is also Euripidean:

> Yea, and with weariness of lips and eyes,
> With breaking of the bosom and with sighs,
> We labor, and are clad and fed with grief
> And filled with days we would not fain behold
> And nights we would not hear of; we wax old,
> All we wax old and wither like a leaf.
> We are outcast, strayed between bright sun and moon;
> Our light and darkness are as leaves of flowers,
> Black flowers and white, that perish; and the moon
> As midnight, and the night as daylight hours.

The chorus of the Heracles gives the Euripidean attitude to this condition of life. Her. 107 ff. Cf. P. Masqueray, Euripide et ses Idées, p. 272.

What disposition we are to make of the tears shed on our journey to this bourne, we do not learn from either poet, although Swinburne does make some interesting suggestions.

> What shall be done with all these tears of ours?
> Shall they make watersprings in the fair heaven
> To bathe the brows of morning? or like flowers
> Be shed and shine before the starriest hours,
> Or make the raiment of the weeping seven?
> Or rather, O our masters, shall they be
> Food for the famine of the grievous sea,
> A great well-head of lamentation
> Satiating the sad gods? or fall and flow
> Among the years and seasons to and fro
> And wash their feet with tribulation
> And fill them full with grieving ere they go.

Throughout Euripides they trickle just as freely and at times with as much ostentation.

> *δάκρυα τ'ἐκ δακρίων καταλείβεται*
> *ἀμετέροισι δόμοις·*

Swinburne's high gods mix our drink with the bubbling bitterness of life and death and hold it to our lips and laugh; but they taste not, lest they too change and sleep. They mix it, not for the man who has sinned, as in Aeschylus, nor for the man marked for destruction, as in Sophocles, but for the whole human race. Swinburne takes the Euripidean outlook; god confounds everything.

> But up in heaven the high gods one by one
> Lay hands upon the draught that quickeneth,
> Fulfilled with all tears shed and all things done,
> And stir with soft imperishable breath
> The bubbling bitterness of life and death
> And hold it to our lips and laugh; but they
> Preserve their lips from tasting night or day,
> Lest they too change and sleep, the fates that spun,
> The lips that made us and the hands that slay;
> Lest all these change and heaven bow down to none,
> Change and be subject to the secular sway
> And terrene revolution of the sun.
> Therefore they thrust it from them, putting time away.

Euripides cites an instance and adds his comment; Hec. 952 ff. In Orestes the chorus cries "Alas for the deeds of the malice of heaven," and in the Ion Creusa laments the 'wrongful-reckless deeds of gods! For justice where shall we make suit if it is our Lords' injustice that crushes us. The wish to reduce the gods to man's wretchedness has a ring of Homeric naïveté, but we get a hint of it in Hipp. 1415, where in reply to his father's admission that the gods have caused his wits to stumble, Hippolytus cries:

> O that men's curses could but strike the gods.
> (See also Bacchae, 1347.)

MIXED INFLUENCE

CHARACTERIZATION

DOUBLE CHARACTERISTICS. The characters of Swinburne's Greek plays are peculiar in this respect; in action and in the contemplation of action they are Aeschylean, while in retrospection and in sentiment they are strongly Euripidean. This is particularly true of Althaea, his greatest Greek creation.

ALTHAEA. No character could be more Aeschylean than Althaea when she uses her intelligence to direct some determination of will. She looks forward with a clearness of vision and a certainty of purpose that make her a rival of the great Clytemnestra. She is surely "One of those Aeschylean women, a monstrous goddess, who had in her tragic and Titanic passion" to the highest degree. She looks backward, however, with Euripidean tenderness of thought that too often degenerates into Euripidean sentimentality.

THE THEME OF THE BRAND. In one Aeschylean aspect we meet her on the title page, where we see

> What the child-destroying cruel Thestius' child,
> Fire-taught and fire-incited, brought about,
> Rekindling to a purple glow the brand
> Coeval with her own child's natal cry;
> Matched with his span of life the three fates spanned
> When they wrought out his destiny hard by. (Coeph 602 ff.)

This fire-motif lights the steps of Althaea from the prologue to the exodos. Her very sleep is turned into a fire and her dreams to stuff that kindles it. She sees that Artemis, in sending Atalanta to join the hunt, 'hath lit Fire where the old fire went out;' and she complains that the Fates

> Shed fire across my eyelids mixed with night
> And burn me blind and disilluminate
> My sense of seeing, and my perspicuous soul
> Darken with vision; seeing, I see not, hear
> And hearing am not holpen, but mine eyes
> Stain many tender broideries in the bed—
> and my brows and lips
> Tremble and sob in sleeping like swift flames
> That tremble, or water when it sobs with heat
> Kindled from under.

This is anxiety such as Clytemnestra feigned to have felt for her husband when he was beset by the dangers around Troy. (Cf. Agam. 889 ff.) But in Althaea there is no hypocrisy, her motive is as perspicuous as her soul, and her vision as clear as Cassandra's.

Before the birth of Meleager she dreamed that she bore a firebrand. When at his birth one of the fates gave him life till "the brand upon the hearth burn down," from the bed she

> Sprang, and drew forth the brand and cast on it
> Water, and trod the flame barefoot, and crushed
> With naked hand spark beaten out of spark
> And blew against and quenched it;

Later she dreamed again that the brand burst on fire and faded, and Death came and with dry lips blew the charred ash into her breast, while Love crushed the ember beneath his feet. In speaking against the love of Meleager for Atalanta, she reminds him that with time blind love burns out; and from love's light and fiery dreams spring heavy sorrows. In her fear of the fate of her son her heart takes fire and trembles flamewise and tears burn her eyes fierce as fire. She sees Meleager's head glitter and his hand burn its way through the furrow of sundering spears. She calls attention to the bitter and rooted love that burns between them. The very sunlight is 'the frequent flame of day.' It is, of course, natural to call for burnt-offering when she learns of the death of the boar; but immediately after the sacrifice, when she is informed by the messenger that Meleager has slain her brothers, she cries:

> Wast thou born fire, and shalt thou not devour?

The chorus takes up the theme:

> The fire thou madest, will it consume even thee?

and she answers:

> My dreams are fallen upon me; burn thou too.

She imagines her sister Leda cursing her and saying:

> A sorrow and not a son,
> Sister, thou barest, even a burning fire,
> A brand consuming thine own soul and me

But ye now, sons of Thestius, make good cheer,
For ye shall have such wood to funeral fire
As no king hath; and flame that once burnt down
Oil shall not quicken or breath relume or wine
Refresh again;

Had her brothers died a natural death she might have

Strewn with flowers their fire and on their tomb
Hung crowns and over them a song, and seen
Their praise outflame their ashes;

Thereupon she resolves that they shall have honor

and such funereal flame
As strews men's ashes in their enemies' face
And blinds their eyes who hate them;

Determined to avenge her brothers, she vows that her eyes

shall see never nor touch anything
Save blood unstaunched and fire unquenchable.

The naïveté of the following question of the chorus suggests the question that the Agamemnon chorus puts to Cassandra; and the vision of Althaea is strongly reminiscent of the vision of Cassandra. (Agam. 1215 ff.)

What wilt thou do? what ails thee? for the house
Shakes ruinously; wilt thou bring fire for it?

She replies

Fire in the roofs and on the lintels fire.
Lo ye, who stand and weave, between the doors,
There; and blood drips from hand and thread and stains
Threshold and raiment and me passing in
Flecked with the sudden sanguine drops of death.

And later she cries,

I am fire and burn myself; keep clear of fire.

After she has kindled the brand, she burns with it;

lo, the fire I lit,
I burn with fire to quench it; yea, with flame
I burn up even the dust and ash thereof.

The stichomachy that follows reads almost like a conflagration.

Ch. Woman, what fire is this thou burnest with?
Al. Yea, to the bone, yea, to the blood and all.
Ch. For this thy face and hair are as one fire.
Al. A tongue that licks and beats upon the dust.
Ch. And in thine eyes are hollow light and heat.
Al. Of flame not fed with hand or frankincense.
Ch. I see a faint fire lightening from the hall.
Al. Gaze, stretch your eyes, strain till the lids drop off.
Ch. Flushed pillars down the flickering vestibule.
And a long brand that blackens; and white dust."

She announces the death of Meleager just as Clytemnestra announces the death of Agamemnon:

That is my son, my flesh, my fruit of life,
My travail and the year's weight of my womb,
Meleager, a fire enkindled of mine hands,
And of mine hands extinguished; this is he. (Cf. Agam. 1404.)

σῦτός ἐστιν Ἀγαμέμνων ἐμὸς
πόσις, νεκρὸς δὲ, τῆσδε δεξιᾶς χερὸς
ἔργον, δικαίας τέκτονος. τάδ' ὧδ' ἔχει.

She prays death to spare her until she sees the brand burn down and die. She even experiences a physical sensation of burning.

I feel the fire upon my face
And on my cheek the burning of a brand.
Yea, the smoke bites me, yea, I drink the steam
With nostril and with eyelid and with lip
Insatiate and intolerant; and mine hands
Burn, and the fire feeds upon mine eyes; I reel
As one made drunk with living, whence he draws
Drunken delight; yet I, though mad for joy,
Loathe my long living and am waxen red
As with the shadow of shed blood; behold,
I am kindled with the flames that fade in him,
I am swollen with subsiding of his veins,
I am flooded with his ebbing; my lit eyes
Flame with the falling fire that leaves his lids
Bloodless; my cheek is luminous with blood
Because his face is ashes;

In the kommos the semichorus takes up the cry:

He wastes as the embers quicken,
With the brand he fades as a brand.

and with nice balance of phrase the chorus sings to Meleager:

Thou madest thy sword as a fire,
With fire for a sword thou art slain.

It soon becomes a part of Meleager's cry:

The flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten like lead.

and

My heart is within me
As an ash in the fire.

Between his mother and Atalanta he draws a sharp contrast:

Though thou art as fire
Fed with fuel in vain,
My delight, my desire
Is more chaste than the rain,
More pure than the dewfall, more holy than stars are
that live without stain.

And again addressing the chorus:

Will ye crown me my tomb
Or exalt me my name,
Now my spirits consume,
Now my flesh is a flame?

who answer:

Turn back now, turn thee,
As who turns to wake;
Though the life in thee burn thee,
Couldst thou bathe it and slake
Where the sea-ridge of Helle hangs heavier, and east upon
west waters break?

In his last speech, while addressing his mother he says:

and with my knees
Would worship, but thy fire and subtlety,
Dissundering them, devour me; for these limbs
Are as light dust and crumblings from mine urn

Before the fire has touched them; and my face
As a dead leaf or dead foot's mark on snow
. . . . . for all my veins
Fail me, and all mine ashen life burns down.
I would thou hadst let me live; but gods averse,
But fortune, and the fiery feet of change
And time, these would not, these tread out my life,
These, and not thou:

ALTHAEA UNDER THE SPELL OF ATÉ. From this we see at once that Althaea is an abnormal character, that at the very beginning of the play she is under the spell of Até, already made infatuate by the powers that control her destiny. She hates Artemis just as Prometheus hates Zeus, and for a reason somewhat similar. Artemis has long afflicted her land, and has now thrown temptation in the way of her son. So she felt the power of doom just as truly as Cassandra felt it at the palace of Agamemnon; and although her vision was not so clear, her premonition led her to the truth.

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GODS. Her faith in the existence of the Gods is Aeschylean, and, although she does not display the conventional Greek fear of them, she is conventionally reverent; she praises them when she perceives that she has experienced good at their hands. But on such occasions the audience is made aware that the situation is one of dramatic irony, which makes it all the more Aeschylean.

ATTITUDE TO SON. In her treatment of her son she is, like Clytemnestra, "the impersonation of tyrannic self-will, wronged and angered and turned to vengeance. She was the keeper of her son's life; she had been insolent enough to extinguish the brand in the very presence of the fate who had promised him life until the brand was consumed. For this presumption she seems to have begun early to show signs of suffering from a mind diseased. Justly proud of her son, she could not but feel indignation at his attitude to Atalanta; it meant ruin from the start. And, although she knew that her brothers and her son were none too friendly, she was utterly overwhelmed at the unnatural crime of kindred slaughter. Her heart was hardened like Clytemnestra's from brooding over the fate of her daughter. Althaea promised her brethren a funeral pyre such as had burnt for none other; she was resolved that they should not go down to Hades unattended. She

exults in her deed just as Clytemnestra exults to the chorus of Agamemnon, and both make the same justification. Althaea says

> and these my son
> Not reverencing his gods nor mine own heart
> Nor the old sweet years for old venerable things,
> But cruel and in his raving like a beast,
> Hath taken away to slay them.

In the same manner Clytemnestra justifies herself:

> He (Agamemnon) caring no more for her death than for the death of a beast of the field, though he had sheep in abundance in his fleecy flocks, sacrificed his own child to charm away the Thracian winds. Agam. 1415 ff..

Althaea feared that her mother Eurythemis might grieve, hearing how her sons came down to her in the dark,

> Unburied, unavenged, as kinless men
> And had a queen their sister.

It is with somewhat of a spirit of family pride that she justifies her deed. The bitter irony of Clytemnestra is far more terrible.

> The victim has no need of the wailings of the people of the house; but Iphigenia, his child, lovingly, as is meet, shall welcome her father at the ford of the swift-flowing Acheron, and put her arms about him and kiss him. (Ag. 1555 ff.)

ALTHAEA AND ATALANTA. Althaea's hatred of Atalanta is more genuine than Clytemnestra's for Cassandra, and is due, partly to the jealousy of a mother who has always dominated the heart of her son, and partly to her terror of the strange woman, so different from herself and the woman she would choose for her son's bride. This is apparent in spite of her stern tone in the sermon on the law. Clytemnestra's feeling is more of contempt or disgust; she has no fear of a slave brought home from a conquered city. She sneers at the corpse of her husband as the darling of many a Chryseis. The swan-song of one of these is as a relish to her own love. To both herself and Agamemnon such things had long ago become *οἷά περ νομίζεται*.

Atalanta was a woman armed, the wholly unusual.

> A woman armed makes war upon herself,
> Unwomanlike, and treads down use and wont
> And the sweet common honor that she hath,
> Love, and the cry of children, and the hand

Trothplight and mutual mouth of marriages.
This doth she being unloved; whom if one love,
Not fire nor iron and the wide-mouthed wars
Are deadlier than her lips or braiden hair.
For of the one comes poison, and a curse
Falls from the other and burns the lives of men.

ALTHAEA AND OENEUS. Oeneus enters at the close of Meleager's reply to his mother's sermon on the Law, and attempts to assume a dignity and port in keeping with his political rank and his hypothetical importance in his household. His air is that of a judge come to decide between mother and son; he implies that one is light of wit, and the other is "scared with vain dreams and fluttering like spent fire." One he reproves for being fain to undo things done; the other for being swift to esteem them overmuch. His own assurance rests on the fact that he is

a king
Full of past days, and wise from years endured.

He feels kindly towards Atalanta because of her beauty and her modesty; and he philosophizes on the changes wrought by time that now brings

Among men armed a woman, foreign born,
A virgin, not like the natural flower of things
Unloveable, no light for a husband's house,
Espoused; a glory among unwedded girls,
And chosen of gods who reverence maidenhood.

Still he is willing to accept whatever help such a maiden may contribute to the slaying of the boar. He honors her, and in doing so honors the gods whom she follows. But as for his son the obligation is clear;

but thou
Abstain thy feet from following and thine eyes
From amorous touch, nor set towards hers thine heart,
Son, lest hate bear no deadlier fruit than love.

Thereupon Althaea addresses Oeneus for the first and last time in the play, and in a manner that bespeaks a tolerant contempt. She is weary of wise words. "O king, thou art wise, but wisdom halts;" One might imagine Clytemnestra dismissing Agamemnon in just this manner, had she not decided to slay him.

EURIPIDEAN INFLUENCE. THE GODS. Althaea accepts the gods with Aeschylean faith and curses them with Euripidean audacity. She was herself sprung from the gods; their blood was in her veins, their passions in her heart. Even her judgment is not that of a mortal, but rather of a temper of the race divine. Her knowledge of their will and temper enables her to assume towards them a very definite attitude, which she maintains to the end of the play. She suffers from no illusions, for she is well aware of the hopelessness of human destiny; she is not deceived by the solicitude of the fates in the welfare of her new-born babe, knowing that 'they mock us with a little piteousness, and spare us but to smite.' She speaks at times more as the equal of the gods than as a mortal; she is often wanting in reverence, while on occasion she is really impious. Her irreverence is due, in part, to her resentment at the unkind treatment experienced at the hands of Artemis; but it arises, in greater measure, from a deep-seated bitterness against the gods,—from her certain knowledge that they use their power to the hurt of mortals, whenever the inclination comes upon them. Man's sad plight is deep-set in her mind; she regards him with a sort of Promethean pity, although this pity is not ennobled by any yearning to do him service. She is too well aware of the hopelessness of such an idea. Sharp upon the last note of the chorus strikes the discord of her question:

> What are ye singing, what is this ye sing?

The maidens reply that they are bringing flowers and song and raiment to propitiate the goddess. To this her reply is a theme that she amplifies and modulates and develops with variation upon variation; but in the end it is substantially the same.

> Night, a black hound, follows the white fawn day,
> Swifter than dreams the white flown feet of sleep;
> Will ye pray back the night with any prayers?
> And though the spring put back a little while
> Winter, and snows that plague all men for sin,
> And the iron time of cursing, yet I know
> Spring shall be ruined with the rain, and storm
> Eat up like fire the ashen autumn days.

The chorus suggests that "One doth well, being patient of the gods," (cf. Eurip. Hel. 252) at which Althaea demurs; 'their

healing herbs infect our blood, they give us poisonous drink for wine and gall for milk and cursing for a prayer.

> There is nothing stabile in the world
> But the gods break it.

Smitten in the death of her brothers and realizing that she is now in the presence of her old nameless dread, she cries:

> Our time is come upon us, it is here.
> The gods are many about me, I am one,
> They rend me, they divide me, they destroy.
> They are strong, they are strong, I am broken and
> they prevail

She accuses the gods of wanton malevolence,

> We.....all our days
> Sin and have hunger and die infatuated,
> For madness have ye given us and not health,
> And sins whereof we know not; and for these
> Death and sudden destruction unawares.

As her grief grows more intense her audacity incites her to claim a place with them, just as wanton, just as inconsistent:

> My breath drawn
> Shames me and monstrous things and violent gods.
> What strange things eaten or drunken, O great gods,
> Make me as you, or as the beasts that feed,
> Slay and divide and cherish their own hearts?

Then she reaches the culmination of audacity in

> ye strong gods,
> Give place unto me; I am as one of you
> To give life and to take life.

After she has kindled the brand she laughs, 'as the gods laugh at us'; she has no prayer to offer.

> I that did this will weep not nor cry out,
> Cry ye and weep; I will not call on gods,
> Call ye on them.

She has maintained to the bitter end the attitude of self-sufficiency that she took at the close of the first episode:

> Whatever intolerable or glad
> The swift hours weave or unweave, I go hence
> Full of mine own soul, perfect of myself,
> Toward mine and me sufficient.

This bitterness against the gods is perhaps temperamental in part,—they have infected her blood,—but it is in great measure due to her Euripidean contemplation of the phenomena of life. She certainly has a definite complaint against Artemis, in the utterance of which she throws discretion to the winds.

> First Artemis for all this harried land
> I praise not, and for wasting of the boar
> That mars with tooth and tusk and fiery feet
> Green pasturage and the grace of standing corn,
> And meadow and marsh with springs and unblown leaves,
> Flocks and swift herds and all that bite sweet grass,
> I praise her not; what things are these to praise?

Both the speaker of the prologue and the chorus justify the sending of the boar. The former, in his invocation to Artemis, acknowledges that it was

> Sent in thine anger against us for sin done,
> And bloodless altars without wine or fire.

The chorus gives a more definite explanation:

> But when the king did sacrifice and gave
> Each god fair dues of wheat and blood and wine,
> Her not with bloodshed and burnt-offering
> Revered he, nor with salt and cloven cake;
> Wherefore, being wroth, she plagued the land.

Unconvinced by this explanation, or at least ignoring it, Althaea at once makes a second complaint. She has learned of the coming of 'Arcadian Atalanta, snowy-souled,' and in this sees again the malevolence of Artemis.

> Yea, but a curse she hath sent above all this
> To hurt us where she healed us, and hath lit
> Fire where the old fire went out,

Love is coming, "a thwart sea-wind full of rain and foam." From it there is no escape; its universality strikes her at the heart.

> But this most,
> This moves me, that for wise men as for fools,
> Love is one thing, an evil thing, and turns
> Choice words and wisdom into fire and air.

Cf. Euripides, Medea, 330,

> Alas, to mortals what a curse is love.

But against the irresistible she will do what she can; she will go arm her son, 'lest love or some man's anger work him harm.'

CEREMONIAL. In matters of ceremony Althaea displayed the conventional reverence for the gods, and expressed her obligation for their kindness. Her first cry, when she learns of the death of the boar, is

> some bring flowers and crown
> These gods and all the lintel and shed wine,
> Fetch sacrifice and slay, for heaven is good.

With a sense of well-being she can feel kindly toward them, although she has just expressed strong disapproval of Artemis for harrying the land. After the narrative of the herald, wherein Meleager appears in such a heroic rôle, she cries again,

> Laud ye the gods, for this they have given is good.

She adds, however, with Euripidean misgiving,

> And what shall be, they hide until their time.

Some have perished in the hunt, but that was to be expected.

> But let all sad things be,
> Till all have made before the prosperous gods
> Burnt offering, and pour out the floral wine.
> Look fair, O gods, and favorable, for we
> Praise you with no false heart and flattering mouth
> Being merciful, but with pure souls and prayer.

This, of course, is merely ritualistic; under the circumstances it is what is expected of her. The herald, however, is properly impressed, for he replies:

> Thou hast prayed well; for whoso fears not these,
> But once being prosperous, waxes huge of heart,
> Him shall some new thing unaware destroy,

a characteristic Aeschylean idea stated with Aeschylean irony.

POTHOS. Althaea is distinctly Euripidean in her ability to change suddenly from a stern fierce mood to one of yearning and tender reminiscence. This is revealed in her attitude to her son, her brothers, her absent relatives and her dead mother. In the rhesis of the first episode, after her condemnation of love and her arraignment of the gods, she becomes reminiscent of her new-born babe and the presence of the Fates at his birth.

For I said,
These are the most high Fates that dwell with us,
And we find favor a little in their sight,
A little, and more we miss of, and much time
Foils us; howbeit they have pitied me, O son,
And thee most piteous, thee a tenderer thing
Than any flower of fleshly seed alive.
Wherefore I kissed and hid him with my hands,
And covered under arms and hair and wept,
And feared to touch him with my tears and laughed;

In her pride of her son's prowess she sees him

Always also a flower of three suns old,
The small one thing that lying drew down my life
To lie with thee and feed thee; a child and weak,
Mine, a delight to no man, sweet to me.

After she has kindled the brand, her mind reverts once more to the childhood of her son:

Yet O child,
Son, first-born, fairest—O sweet mouth, sweet eyes,
That drew my life out through my suckling breast,
That shone and clove my heart through—O soft knees
Clinging, O tender treadings of soft feet,
Cheeks warm with little kissings, O child, child,
What have we made each other? Lo, I felt
Thy weight cleave to me, a burden of beauty, O son,
Thy cradled brows and loveliest loving lips,
The floral hair, the little lightening eyes,
And all thy goodly glory; with mine hands
Delicately I fed thee, with my tongue
Tenderly spake, saying, Verily in god's time,
For all the little likeness of thy limbs,
Son, I shall make thee a kingly man to fight,
A lordly leader; and hear before I die,
She bore the goodliest sword of all the world.

After comparing him with the great Tydeus (Aesch. Sept. 380–395), she reverts to his infancy:

Yet was he then but a span long, and moaned
With inarticulate mouth inseparate words,
And with blind lips and fingers wrung my breast
Hard, and thrust out with foolish hands and feet,
Murmuring.

and later,

> But fair for me thou wert, O little life,
> Fruitless, the fruit of mine own flesh, and blind,
> More than much gold, ungrown, a foolish flower.
> For silver nor bright snow nor feather of foam
> Was whiter, and no gold was yellower than thine hair,
> O child, my child.

In her terrible anguish of soul, when contemplating her brothers' fate, her mind reverts again to the days of their childhood, when they sported with her and made her familiar with armor and hounds and hunting spears. And between them comes

> the love of my born son,
> A new-made mother's new-born love, that grows
> From the soft child to the strong man, now soft,
> Now strong as either, and still one sole same love,
> Strives with me, no light thing to strive withal.

Such passages are numerous in Euripides. (Cf. Tro. 740 ff.)

> O darling child, O prized above all price,
> Thou must leave thy poor mother, die by foes. * * *
> Child, dost thou weep, dost comprehend thy doom?
> Why with thy hands clutch, clinging to my robe,
> Like fledgling fleeing to nestle 'neath my wings? * * *
> O tender nursling, sweet to mother, sweet!
> O balmy breath! in vain and all in vain
> This breast in swaddling-band has nurtured thee.
> Vainly I travailed and was spent with toils!
> Now, and no more forever, kiss thy mother,
> Fling thee on her that bare thee, twine thine arms
> Around my waist and lay thy lips to mine.

Hecuba laments that the child had not died in battle. Althaea makes the same lament for her brothers, and Oeneus for Meleager. (Eurip. Tro. 1167 ff.)

> Ah, darling, what ill death has come on thee!
> Hadst thou for Troy been slain, when thou hadst known
> Youth, wedlock's bliss, and godlike sovereignty,
> Blest wert thou—if herein may aught be blest;
> But now, once seen and sipped by thy child-soul,
> Thine home-bliss fleets forgotten, unenjoyed.
> Poor child, how sadly thine ancestral halls
> Upreared by Loxias, from thine head have shorn
> The curls that oft thy mother softly smoothed

> And kissed, wherefrom through shattered bones forth grins
> Murder—a ghastliness I cannot speak.

Medea, about to slay her children, speaks in a similar strain:

> Give, O babes,
> Give to your mother the right hand to kiss.
> O dearest hand, O lips most dear to me,
> O form and noble features of my children,
> Blessing be on you, there! for all things here
> Your sire hath stolen. Sweet, O sweet embrace,
> O children's roseleaf skin, O balmy breath,
> Away, away; strength faileth me to gaze
> On you, but I am overcome of evil.

It would be easy to multiply examples; these are sufficient to show the mental attitude of the two poets. For an Aeschylean example see Choephoroe, 755 ff.

ALTHAEA THE PREACHER. Althaea was so sure of her sophistry that she treated as her mental inferiors all who came in contact with her. Her thought dominated the play from the time she appeared in the first episode until, towards the close of the exodos, she vowed never to open her lips again. The woman who could be so tender in thoughts of her son and brothers and absent relatives was always severe in conversation with them, giving them advice that closed with a gnomic utterance which veiled a threat, and at times addressing them in the language of a veritable martinet. Sometimes for their enlightenment she made use of the long rhesis developed in rhetorical style. We sometimes find a theme, with elaboration, illustration, application, and conclusion with threat openly expressed or concealed. The first of these occurs at the close of the first episode and is directed at the chorus, although it applies to her son. Its theme is Love the Tyrant. (Cf. Eur. Hip. 536 ff.) Her second is addressed to her son and is based on the same theme, although for an introduction she discourses on The Law, and incidentally uses reminiscences from Aeschylus and Sophocles, finally arriving at her point of attack, a woman armed. Of her beware; 'her lips are deadlier than fire or iron or the wide-mouthed wars.' The theme of the third is Piety, the majesty of kindred blood (Δία σύναιμον) and is addressed to the chorus, but serves in effect as the funeral oration over her slain brothers.

ATTITUDE TOWARD ATALANTA. Although Althaea regarded Atalanta with jealousy and hate, she nevertheless gave indication of a certain amount of fear. She recognized her significance from the very beginning. She saw in her the curse sent by Artemis for the overthrow of Meleager,—a curse that was just as effective as Phaedra for the ruin of Hippolytus. Although she is violent in her denunciation, her tongue is curbed to a degree by the very reverent attitude taken by the chorus, the king, and by Meleager. Her brothers are of her opinion, but all three are cowed by the close of Atalanta's speech in justification of her joining the hunt. The speaker of the prologue refers to her as

> The maiden rose of all thy maids,
> Arcadian Atalanta, snowy-souled,
> Fair as the snow and footed as the wind.

To the chorus

> She is holier than all holy days or things,
> The sprinkled water or fume of perfect fire;
> Chaste, dedicated to pure prayers and filled
> With higher thoughts than heaven; a maiden clean.
> Pure iron, fashioned for a sword, and man
> She loves not; what should one such do with love?

To the king she is

> a glory among unwedded girls,
> And chosen of gods who reverence maidenhood.

To Meleager she is

> Most fair and fearful, feminine, a god,
> Faultless; whom I that love not, being unlike,
> Fear and give honor and choose from all the gods.

While to Althaea she is

> the strange woman, she, the flower, the sword,
> Red from spilt blood, a mortal flower to men,
> Adorable, detestable,

So it seems that Swinburne, consciously or unconsciously, has made Atalanta the hypostasis of Artemis. She is certainly more than a mortal maid who haunted the wilds and followed the lead of the Daughter of Leto. Her divinity is recognized by the chorus, by Meleager, by Oeneus, the chief huntsman, by all save the brothers of Althaea, who paid the price of their irreverence; even by Althaea herself, who saw in her the power come to

break her life. It was she who filled Althaea's mind with the fire that kindled the fatal brand; who caused her to rail one moment at Love, the evil thing, and the next to weep over fond memories of her child. And Althaea, in lamenting the death of her brothers, is correct in her surmise of the cause, She has divined the real intention of the Fates; the instrument chosen to realize that intention was Atalanta. Her appearance and her psychological effect suggested divinity as the Greeks realized it. Meleager was too deeply impressed with her sanctity to give any hint of the love that had overcome him. In just such a manner Hippolytus chose to follow Artemis, scorning the cult of Aphrodite. Both wished to be 'linked with companionship too high for man,' and both fell before the "blast of the envy of god." It is not surprising, therefore, that Althaea did what she could to rescue her son from the curse that was about to fall upon him, and from which she felt in her inmost heart that there was no escape. Her struggle against Love is but the prelude of that greater struggle, so like Medea's, against the doing of a deed that Fate refuses to leave undone.

MELEAGER. Meleager is Hippolytus writ large. He displays all the virtues of the pure-hearted hunter of Euripides without any of his pettiness. He is, of course, a much greater man, a winner of battles at home and abroad; but he meets the same sinister fate in the hour of his triumph at the hands of inscrutable powers and for reasons hard to explain. Throughout the play he is the blameless knight, patient alike under the sermons of his mother, the vindictiveness of his uncles, the condescension of his father, and the disregard of Atalanta. Against the latter he is warned by mother, father, uncles, and chorus; they all assume that he loves the votary of Artemis, although his statement to his mother makes clear his own attitude: in his wanderings in the Colchian land he saw many strange things, but

> I saw not one thing like this one seen here,
> Most fair and fearful, feminine, a god,
> Faultless; whom I that love not, being unlike,
> Fear and give honor and choose from all the gods.

He regards her from the first as Hippolytus regards Artemis, and the parallel holds to the end. We find Aphrodite plotting the death of Hippolytus because he honored Artemis.

> Theseus' son, born of the Amazon,
> Hippolytus, pure-hearted Pittheus' ward,
> Sole mid the folk of this Troezenian land
> Sayeth that vilest of the gods am I;
> Rejects the couch; of marriage will he none,
> But honors Phoebus' sister Artemis,
> Zeus's child, and counts her greatest of the gods.

But

> He knows not Hades gates wide-flung for him,
> And this day's light the last his eyes shall see.

She feels nemesis because Hippolytus

> Through the green wood in the maid's train still
> With swift hounds sweeps the wild beasts from the earth,
> Linked with companionship too high for man.

Such is the plight of Meleager; Artemis, in the guise of Atalanta, has come to destroy him as the price of the boar. On this subject Cornford, Thucydides Mythistoricus, p. 253, has an interesting paragraph. "The notion that a passion like Eros can be the instrument of the divine jealousy finds an interesting expression on a vase of the same class as the Darius krater figured on p. 195. In the central field the death of Meleager is represented inside a house. Outside, and on a higher level, sits Aphrodite, with her head inclined in sorrow, watching the scene. In her left hand she holds a bow and arrow; and beside her stands Eros. He is unmistakable, but the name inscribed above him is not his own, but Phthonos. The significance is clear; Aphrodite symbolizes the love of Meleager for Atalanta, of which she is the supernatural cause, the paraitía; Eros-Phthonos is the enhanced passion which led Meleager to overstep the bounds assigned to man, and brought on the doom by which the jealousy of heaven is appeased."

Both heroes fall because of an act of justice. Meleager slays his uncles for their treatment of Atalanta, and so brings about his own destruction; while Hippolytus is overthrown by the plot of Aphrodite, because he had scorned the love of Phaedra.

The kommos describing the death of Meleager is one of the greatest in literature. Its structure Way has imitated in several places in his Translation of Euripides, to show only too clearly how great was the virtuosity of Swinburne. All words of comment are inadequate; surely Swinburne was right in this instance, when

he said that it was the business of the reader to rejoice in the song that is sung for him and praise the gift of the singer. As for the song, it is not his to handle. With this in mind, I shall try to observe due reverence for this great death symphony, although material for comparison is abundant.

Meleager, while crowning Atalanta, is stricken with sudden agony from the kindling of the brand,

> and grasping his own hair groaned
> And cast his raiment round his face and fell.

His father Oeneus leapt down

> And caught him, crying out twice, O child; and thrice,
> So that men's eyelids thickened with their tears,

just as in the Medea, Creon, entering the palace, falls over the corpse of his daughter

> And straightway wailed and clasped the body round,
> And kissed it, crying, O my hapless child,
> What god thus horribly hath thee destroyed?

Both dying men are brought home to the sound of mourning. Euripides' chorus draws a very sympathetic picture:

> Lo, lo, the stricken one borne
> Hitherward with his young flesh torn
> And his golden head of its glory shorn.
> Ah griefs of the house, what doom
> Twofold on thine halls hath come
> By the gods' will shrouded in sorrow's gloom.

No translator could make Euripides approach the splendor of the passage in Swinburne. The chorus sings in two-verse groups, interrupted by three verses of pentameter. Alcestis wastes away in the same manner but to no such beautiful music. (Cf. Alcestis, 201 ff.)

> she wanes and wastes,
> Drooping her head, a misery-burdened weight;
> But yet, albeit hardly breathing still,
> To the sun's rays fain would she lift her eyes,
> As nevermore, for the last time now
> Destined to see the sun's beams and his orb.

The chorus adds its lament;

Cry, land Phaeraean, shrill and keen!
Lift up thy voice to wail thy best
There dying, and thy queenliest
Slow wasting to the gates unseen.

Hippolytus cries aloud in his agony; his mind is on his pain. Meleager, in thirteen stanzas, reviews his past life. His language is full of dignity, elegance, and poetic beauty.

Hippolytus reproaches his father for his fate:

Woe, woe for the son
By the doom of his sire
All marred and undone,
Through my head leapeth fire
Of agony flashes, and throbbeth my brain like a hard-smitten lyre.

For gods' sake bear
Me gently, each thrall;
Thou to right have a care,
Soft let your hands fall;
Tenderly bear the sore mangled, onstepping in tune, one and all.

The unhappy onbearing
And cursed, I ween,
Of his father's own erring,—
Ah Zeus, hast thou seen?
Innocent I, ever fearing the gods, who was wholly heart-clean

Above all men beside,—
Lo, how am I thrust
Into Hades to hide
My life in the dust;
All vainly I reverenced god, and in vain unto man was I just.

Meleager has more self-control, and withholds all blame of his mother:

Let your hands meet
Round the weight of my head;
Lift ye my feet
As the feet of the dead;
For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten as lead.

In this is a little of Phaedra's appeal:

Uplift ye my body, mine head upraise,
Friends, faint be my limbs, and unknit be their bands,
Hold, maidens, my rounded arms and my hands.

Both Meleager and Hippolytus cry for death, but the cry of Meleager is like that of a delirious man; the pain of Hippolytus is more poignant.

Hipp. 1370ff. Let the stricken one be;
Ah, mine anguish again;
Give ye sleep unto me,
Death, salve for my pain,
The sleep of the sword for the wretched, I long, O I long to be slain.

Meleager desires to die, and even takes thought where he wishes to lie buried. He also gets a vision of the world to come. The gods are to blame for his ill-fortune.

The years are hungry,
They wail all their days;
The gods wax angry,
And weary of praise;
And who shall bridle their lips, and who shall straiten their ways?

Hippolytus thinks only of his pain:

Ah for words of a spell
That my soul might take flight
From the tortures, with fell
Unrelentings that smite;
O for the blackness of Hades, the sleep of Necessity's night.

Then for his comfort the voice of Artemis speaks, and clears him of all imputation of wrong.

Unhappy, bowed 'neath what disaster's yoke!
Thine own heart's nobleness hath ruined thee.

He recognizes the voice at once; the form he has never seen.

Ah, perfume breath celestial, mid my pains
I feel thee and mine anguish is assuaged.
Lo, in this place the goddess Artemis.

Then she explains to him his plight and makes it clear why she could not save him; but she promises him venegance and a festival and a memory preserved in song. She urges him to cease hating his father, and, seeing the approach of death, she takes her leave.

Farewell, I may not gaze upon the dead,
Nor may with dying gasps pollute my sight.
And now I see that thou art near the end.

His last words are to his father. I am gone; I see the gates of death; I absolve you, witness Artemis. My strength is overcome; I am gone. Cover my face with my mantle. The whole scene is full of pathos, particularly where the youth sees that his death matters little to the goddess, and is provoked to say,

> Farewell to thy departing, Maiden blest;
> Light falls on thee long friendship's severance.
> Lo, I forgive my father at thy suit,
> As heretofore have I obeyed thy word.
> And o'er my eyes e'en now the darkness draws.
> Take, father, take my body and upraise.

Atalanta regrets coming to Calydon:

> I would that with feet
> Unsandalled, unshod,
> Overbold, overfleet,
> I had swum not nor trod
> From Arcadia to Calydon, northward, a blast of the envy of god.

and later

> I would that as water
> My life's blood had thawn,
> Or as winter's wan daughter
> Leaves lowland and lawn
> Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld thee made dark in thy dawn.

Meleager realizes also that he is dying for the sins of others as well as for his own. Taking leave of his father, he says,

> O holy head of Oeneus, lo, thy son
> Guiltless, yet red with alien blood, yet foul
> With kinship of contaminated lives,
> Lo, for their blood I die; and mine own blood
> For bloodshedding of mine is mixed therewith,
> That death may not discern me from my kin.

So Hipp. 1378 ff.

> Dire curse of my father,
> Sins long ago wrought
> Of mine ancestors gather,
> Their doom tarries not;
> But the scourge overfloweth the innocent—wherefore on me is it brought?

Meleager claims

> with clean heart I die and faultless hand,

just as Hippolytus,

> Innocent I, ever fearing the gods, who was wholly heart-clean.

So Meleager goes down to the dark;

> Thou therefore of thy love
> Salute me and bid fare among the dead
> Well, as the dead fare; for the best man dead
> Fares sadly.

Cf. Od. 11, 488 ff; Eurip. Fr. 537; and the motto of this play, Eur. fr. Mel. 536.

CHARACTER OF ERECHTHEUS. Erechtheus may be viewed in four lights; as king, warrior, husband, and father. In the prologue he questions, as king, his mother earth as to the cause of the plague fallen upon his state. Proud of his ancestry, he pictures his land in loving colors, glances at impending ruin, and puns on the name of his adversary. Then he wonders why the gods have sent upon him 'the confluent surge of loud calamities.' His speech closes with an appeal for help.

As a warrior he is one of those stout oaken Marathon fighters that Aristophanes gives such unstinted praise. In Aeschylus the type is well cut. He does not temporize or haggle about terms; he will fight and die or live, as his lot lies on the lap of the unknown hour. His fate is known to him, and with it he is in accord. By the Athenian herald he is shown to have attained a heroic and supernatural end.

For Praxithea he is all love and admiration. He has found her always wise and perfect of heart; free from Hybris in prosperity, patient in adversity. Swinburne has succeeded in portraying two strong characters in perfect accord. Both recognize the might of Necessity; both feel the injustice of Fate, while regogniz-ing the importance of their sacrifice for the safety of their city. The daughter too accepts her doom without a protest. The crisis has swooped suddenly upon them all, and they meet it without hesitation and with clear discernment. In the Iphigenia at Aulis the situation is somewhat different. Agamemnon, somewhat craven and fearing overmuch the host (cf. 1. 1012) has sent for his daughter for the alleged purpose of giving her in marriage to Achilles. His duplicity merits all the scorn poured upon him by his wife. But Iphigenia, after prayers and tears

and lamentation, in a sudden change of heart expresses a willingness to die, and thus brings about a reconciliation. Swinburne's characters are more admirable; Euripides', more human. The English poet has given us a pair of philosophers who curb their own hearts because they recognize the need; the Greek has given us two very human beings who bluster and rail at fortune, to fall before it in the end.

As a father Erechtheus is not well drawn. Although he speaks very tenderly of his child, he does not speak to her during the entire play. On the other hand, some of the finest touches in the Iphigenia come in the scenes where father and daughter meet. (1221 ff; 1255 ff.) Agamemnon's case is clear; the gods have exacted a price for the overthrow of Ilium,—a price which Agamemnon is not willing to pay, for it concerns him too personally. But his fellow-chieftains, less interested in the price, and more in the profit, insist on payment. It is not so with Erechtheus. The god so set the price of ransom that the royal family must perish in either alternative. To win, Chthonia must be sacrificed, and the king must fall; while the capture of the city meant the ruin of all. Erechtheus, under provocation, assumes a temper toward the gods similar to Althaea's, but under better control. He draws a sharp distinction between the saved city and his own situation. The gods give to the citizens

> Life of their children, flower of all their seed,
> For all their travail fruit, for all their hopes
> Harvest; but we, for all our good things we
> Have at their hands which fill all these folk full,
> Death, barrenness, child-slaughter, curses, cares,
> Sea-leaguer and land-shipwreck;

He graces Apollo with all his epithets, but reserves his praise. The grim situation he accepts because

> save this
> No word is left us and no hope alive.

He recognizes the omnipotence of the gods; of their wisdom and loving-kindness he says nothing. A grim character, his language is very compressed; he says more in a line than is the wont of most tragic characters. He is stronger even than the Aeschylean Agamemnon, who also put on the yoke of Necessity and became the

slayer of his child. Both submit to divine decree, in regard to the justice of which both are in the dark. Agamemnon found it hard to sacrifice his daughter, but harder to become a Liponaus; the word is strong: so of two evils he chose what seemed the lesser, and offered his child to the malice of stubborn winds.

PRAXITHEA. Praxithea is in every way worthy of the love and respect of the king. Brave, dutiful, submissive, self-sacrificing, she sums up in her first speech her whole philosophy of life. Her heart is for her land; 'firm let it stand, whatever bleed or fall.' In her treatment of her daughter she displays the attitude of the best women in Greek drama. Swinburne could not, of course, save her from the long Euripidean rhesis wherein she calls the gods to witness her ills, and shows her great antiquarian knowledge, and her familiarity with the institutions of gods and men. She closes with a childhood picture in true Eripidean-Swinburnian manner. Both writers put such speech in the mouths of women, making them the source of diverse information and the fountain-head of tears. Swinburne, although he condemned somewhat bitterly the fragment of Euripides, on which he based this rhesis, owes to it more than he admits, and has not attained any startling superiority, as he implies in his letter. (See Gosse, p. 231.)

Praxithea, in her farewell to her daughter, comments on the gods in Euripidean fashion. She is innocent of wrongdoing; she has suffered much for many reasons, without meriting any of it; but she will hold her peace. Having shown that from the heartless gods comes no help, she breaks into a fine piece of Euripidean tenderness and pathos. The picture of the babe is one of the finest ever drawn. For her people she gives her child to

> Death and the under gods who crave
> So much for what they give.

She sets aside, however, for the sake of her country her personal loss; it wrests from Ruin the power to take hold on Athens.

When the herald comes to report the battle, she greets him with a fierce eagerness.

> Man, what thy mother bare thee born to say,
> Speak; for no word yet wavering on thy lip
> Can wound me worse than thought forestalls or fear.

Learning the death of her husband and the safety of the city, she praises the gods of Athens and prays for death.